



SOLUTION SNAPSHOT

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Advancing a disability inclusion & empowerment agenda in the public sector



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REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

IN BRIEF

An estimated one in six people worldwide lives with a disability, yet systemic barriers continue to limit equitable access to critical public goods and services.

To address this challenge, **Reasonable Accommodations** advances a disability inclusion and empowerment agenda through a portfolio of mutually reinforcing measures. It brings together systems thinking, human centered design and targeted interventions to enhance organizational practices and business processes.

These include accessibility audits, behavioural-science-informed interventions, inclusive public expenditure management, and fit-for-purpose digital solutions.

By working with local and national champions, **Reasonable Accommodations** helps to translate disability inclusion policy commitments into practice, i.e. improvements towards public goods and services that are designed for and accessible to all.

THE CHALLENGE

Globally, an estimated 1.3 billion people—or 16% of the world’s population, live with disabilities.

The “world’s largest minority”—with an estimated 80% living in developing countries—continues to face systemic barriers to accessing public services and infrastructure, and to meaningfully participating in economic and social life.

These persistent gaps not only undermine individual rights and dignity, but also carry broader development costs. They erode economic growth potential, limit civic participation, and weaken trust in public institutions as fair and responsive providers of goods and services.

Underemployment alone costs low- and middle-income countries up to 7% of GDP, while less than 0.5% of global ODA targets disability inclusion. Without deliberate action, these inequities will deepen, undermining SDG commitments and continuing to leave millions behind.



THE TOOL

Reasonable Accommodations seeks to advance a disability inclusion and empowerment agenda in the public sector. Anchored in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), it does so through a portfolio of mutually reinforcing measures that address barriers at individual, institutional, and systemic levels. It combines whole-of-government and whole-of-society systems thinking with human-centered design, and targeted technical solutions to ensure that disability inclusion commitments translate into practical improvements, i.e. better designed and more accessible public goods and services.

This portfolio approach recognizes that exclusion is rarely the result of a single policy or design failure, but stems from the interplay of many of factors—including incentives and information gaps; decision-making processes; budgetary choices, and entrenched perceptions and behavioral biases—which interact and compound over time.



UNPACKING THE PORTFOLIO

The portfolio is structured around three distinct workstreams that are mutually reinforcing.

1

First, **systems thinking** leverages UNDP's multidisciplinary expertise and convening power to engage the full **ecosystem** of actors shaping outcomes, including elected officials, civil servants, service providers, civil society, and the private sector. Combined with the second pillar, systems thinking provides a powerful instrument to help rally key stakeholders around a disability inclusion and empowerment agenda.

2

Second, **human-centered design** and **empathy-driven** innovation place persons with disabilities at the center of the co-creation process, helping to surface lived experiences that contribute to challenge entrenched mindsets, not only skillsets.

3

Third, fit-for-purpose **technical solutions** drive greater inclusion through:

- ▶ Infrastructure accessibility audits.
- ▶ Behavioral science-informed decision-making.
- ▶ Mainstreaming disability inclusion across public expenditure management cycles.
- ▶ Integrating digital solutions for inclusive e-governance and digital public services.

Together, these three workstreams strengthen public institutions' capacity to deliver **equitable, accessible, and responsive public goods and services for all.**



WHAT GPGS PROVIDES

Under the *Reasonable Accommodations* portfolio, UNDP can support partners through:

- ▶ Facilitation of multi-stakeholder engagements—bringing together elected officials, civil society organizations, civil servants, service providers, and the private sector under a “disability inclusion” agenda.
- ▶ Organizational diagnostics—understanding the extent to which public institutions are effectively incorporating disability inclusion and disability empowerment principles in their decision-making processes.
- ▶ Awareness raising, sensitization, and capacity development of national and local actors on a disability inclusion and disability empowerment agenda, including through the co-creation of context-specific communications and advocacy campaigns.
- ▶ Technical support in process and workflow re-engineering.
- ▶ Advisory support on suitable digital and AI solutions, in partnership with UNDP’s Digital, AI and Innovation Hub.



KEY PARTNERS

Reasonable Accommodations: Advancing Disability Inclusion and Empowerment is implemented in partnership with national and local champions, including civil society organizations and government partners. The approach also leverages expertise from UNDP’s Open and Inclusive Public Spheres (OIPS), UNDP’s Digitalization, AI and Innovation Hub, and the Human Rights team.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS IN PRACTICE

In 2024–2025, under UNDP’s FutureSmart Flagship initiative, the “Reasonable Accommodations” approach was tested through a portfolio of innovative measures that were introduced in pilot areas in [Ethiopia](#) and [Bhutan](#).

IN ETHIOPIA

In pilot districts of Addis Ababa, disability inclusion was embedded in municipal service design through a robust “user-centric” lens. The pilot engaged with local authorities, civil society organizations, and persons with disabilities to facilitate a transition from policy intent to practical improvements in accessibility and usability—redesigning real service journeys and promoting “learning-by-doing” methods to identify and address physical, procedural, and behavioral barriers in frontline services.

By strengthening the capacity of municipal staff and civil society organization partners to prototype with persons with disabilities—at the center of the co-creation process, the Addis Ababa experience demonstrates how inclusive design can be streamlined. It has generated a replicable model for more responsive and equitable urban public services across Ethiopia.

IN BHUTAN

Under the FutureSmart flagship initiative, UNDP supports national and local partners in Bhutan in the codesign of inclusive public services and infrastructure. The initiative does not view exclusion as an isolated issue, but as a systemic governance challenge.

Piloted in Dagana District, the approach combines human-centred design, empathy building, and institutional capacity development to identify and remove physical, procedural, and attitudinal barriers in public service delivery. Local leaders, civil servants, and disabled persons’ organizations work together to audit infrastructure, redesign service processes, and strengthen awareness and accountability measures at the community level.

The initiative also engages with the Prime Minister’s Office to inform a national policy dialogue, leveraging evidence and lessons learned from the ground, and provides a replicable model for other districts across the country.

The experience illustrates how disability inclusion can be embedded into public administration processes through practical, user-centered innovations, while fostering long-term shifts in institutional mindsets and practices, including among service providers and the private sector.



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